

**INFORMATIONAL REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND
VETERANS AFFAIRS**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204**

October, 2008

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2008

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COMMISSION ON MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Bill Brumbach
Fiscal Analyst for the Commission

A copy of this report is available on the Internet. Reports, minutes, and notices are organized by committee. This report and other documents for this Committee can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>.

I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVE

The Indiana General Assembly enacted legislation directing the Commission on Military and Veterans' Affairs (Commission) to study the following:

- (1) Matters relating to veterans and veterans' affairs.
- (2) Matters relating to the active and reserve members of the armed forces of the United States.

The Commission may study other topics assigned by the Legislative Council or as directed by the commission's chairman. (IC 2-5-20-7.)

The Commission shall annually report the results of the Commission's study in an electronic format under IC 5-14-6 to the General Assembly before November 1. (IC 2-5-20-8.)

II. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM

The Commission was assigned no additional topics of study by the legislative council or the Commission's chairman. The Commission met two times during the 2008 interim session, on August 26, 2008, and September 12, 2008. At the meetings, the Commission received testimony as described below but did not make any findings or recommendations.

III. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

At the August 26, 2008, meeting, Tom Applegate, Director of the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA), provided the Commission with an update on the status of the Military and Family Relief Fund (MFRF) and the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund (VATF). The MFRF has assets amounting to over \$2 million and has accrued \$112,500 in state matching funds. Mr. Applegate stated that grants totaling \$31,897.13 have been awarded from the fund. Mr. Applegate noted that the VATF did not currently have a funding source. He then summarized his suggestions on how to fund the VATF.

The Commission also received testimony from Colonel Joe Ryan, representing the Military Officers Association of America. Mr. Ryan advocated the establishment of a special Indiana veterans' lottery ticket. He also suggested that taxpayers should be allowed to allocate a portion of their tax refund to fund the MFRF or the VATF.

At the September 12, 2008, meeting, Major General R. Martin Umbarger of the Indiana National Guard (Guard) provided an update regarding the Guard. General Umbarger reviewed the composition of the Guard. He summarized various assignments of the Guard as well as certain programs offered to Guard members and their families. General Umbarger also discussed how some members of the 1/152nd Infantry may have been exposed to sodium dichromate while serving in Iraq. He provided the Commission with an overview of the Guard's response after

learning of the possible exposure.

The Commission also received testimony from Lisa Wilkin, representing Operation Firing For Effect. Ms. Wilkin urged the Indiana General Assembly to pass a resolution urging the Congress of the United States to provide full mandatory funding for health care for veterans.

Additional details of the Commission's proceedings are available in the meeting minutes for the Commission, which can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>.

IV. COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission made no findings of fact or recommendations.